

Believer's Baptism at Cultivate | Ridge Point | Third Coast

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CULTIVATE | RIDGE POINT | THIRD COAST
COMMUNITY CHURCHES

616.395.2600 | fearlessfollower.org

**FEARLESS
FOLLOWER**

We are thrilled that you are interested in participating in believer's baptism!

To help you prepare for baptism, we would like you to do a few things:

FIRST, read this booklet. We think it will help you understand:

- What baptism is and isn't
- What to expect on the day of your baptism
- What to bring to your baptism

SECOND, set apart some time to talk about baptism with your family or close community—what it is, why we do it and what it looks like.

THIRD, if after doing these things you have more questions about baptism, send an email to:

MaraP@fearlessfollower.org (Ridge Point)

SarahB@fearlessfollower.org (Cultivate)

ErinR@fearlessfollower.org (Third Coast)

FOURTH, attend our baptism class where we'll cover the nuts and bolts of baptism. Watch fearlessfollower.org for dates, times and location.

What We Believe about Baptism

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Don't you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

Having been buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

Baptism is an important step in the journey of a believer because it is an opportunity for believers to make a public profession of their faith in Jesus. Through baptism we identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We believe baptism is an outward act symbolizing an inward change. It is an act of obedience displaying the forgiveness we have received through Jesus and our commitment to live in His ways.

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

People's last words are important. If you had the opportunity to only say one last thing, what would it be? Matthew tells us that Jesus' last words to his disciples included the command to baptize new believers. Because Jesus commanded this, the disciples went and baptized new believers, and we do the same.

Throughout the Bible we observe the close connection of baptism with a person's response of faith and commitment to follow Jesus. Baptism shows close identification with someone or something else. To be baptized "into" the name of another person indicates that the baptized individual is closely bound to the one into whose name he or she is baptized. As Fearless Followers, we are baptized into the name of Jesus so we can show our identification with Him.

WHEN SOMEONE IS BAPTIZED, THEY PUBLICLY PROCLAIM:

TO GOD

Thank you for saving me. I'm Yours. Help me live a life that shows Jesus to the world.

TO BELIEVERS

Celebrate with me! Jesus has saved me! Remember when He saved you? Encourage me, help me and keep me accountable to follow Jesus.

TO UNBELIEVERS

I want you to know the Jesus I know. If you see any change in my life, if you see anything good in my life, it's not me—it's Him! He wants you to know Him.

Processing Questions:

Why do you want to be baptized?

Who are you going to invite to your baptism?

What do you want your baptism to say to others?

Practicals of Baptism

WHAT DOES BAPTISM LOOK LIKE?

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8:34-38)

We believe that baptism by immersion best symbolizes our sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All agree that water is the element of baptism. But the debate ensues regarding how water should be applied. Some prefer to sprinkle with water in light of a handful of biblical texts that mentions being sprinkled with clean water.¹ Others prefer pouring, to symbolize the Spirit poured out in new-covenant blessing.² Still others prefer to immerse in water. We believe that the Bible clearly teaches baptism by immersion. It is the only mode associated with baptism in the Bible and the only mode that expresses the meaning of baptism as shown in passages such as Romans 6:1-10.³

The mode and meaning of baptism are significantly bound together. The Greek word baptize means "to immerse" in water. Followers of John the Baptist were baptized "in" the Jordan River (Mark 1:5). And in the case of Jesus' baptism by John, words were carefully chosen to explain that he came up "out of" the water. Twice the New Testament refers to baptisms that took place because there was "plenty of water" there (John 3:23; Acts 8:36). In Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch, they went down into the water and came up out of the water (Act 8:38-39).⁴ To us, this implies immersion.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... (Acts 2:38)

The simple answer is, "all who believe." We encourage any believer who has not yet participated in believer's baptism to be baptized by immersion.

But before we are baptized we need to be a believer. Believers are people who have recognized that their sin has separated them from God. They trust that Jesus' death is the only thing that removes their sin and restores their relationship with God. A believer trusts in Christ alone for his or her salvation, committing to live his or her life to Jesus. Baptism, without the previous decision to turn to God and start a new life with Jesus, will not forgive your sins or get you into heaven.

If you are a believer, you are ready to be baptized. Just as a bride and groom symbolize their love for one another with rings, you can show the world your union with Christ through the symbol of baptism.

Go to fearlessfollower.org/next-steps/believer-baptism for more about what we believe about baptism.

WILL BEING BAPTIZED SAVE ME?

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

No, baptism does not save you. The water does not wash away your sins. We only receive salvation through faith in Jesus. Baptism is your way to tell others that you *already* believe. Forgiveness comes through what baptism symbolizes; namely, that Jesus' death covered your sins and His resurrection defeated your death. It is important to understand that being baptized does not grant forgiveness of your sins.

¹Ezekiel 36:25; Titus 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:13-14, 19; 10:22

²Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 10:45; Romans 5:5

³Vintage Church by Driscoll and Breshears: pg 119-120

⁴Understanding Christian Theology edited by Chuck Swindoll and Roy Zuck: pg 1152-1153.

Processing Questions:

What do you believe about baptism?

What is difficult for you to believe?

How has studying scripture affected your beliefs about baptism?

Logistics of Baptism

Here are some baptism logistics to help you feel comfortable and ensure your baptism is truly a joyful experience.

WHAT TO BRING

- Friends and family. Baptism is something to celebrate—help us make it a party! Invite your Rooted or Life Group, colleagues and family, and ask them to sit at the front of the auditorium. Let people know through Facebook, Twitter, emails and phone calls that you’re getting baptized. Invite Christians and non-Christians to come check it out. This is an amazing opportunity for non-Christians to better understand what Jesus did through His death and resurrection.
- A plain dark shirt and shorts to change into for the baptism
- A bathing suit to wear under your dark clothing
- Towels are provided

WHAT TO EXPECT BEFORE THE DAY OF BAPTISM

- A one-hour class to discuss:
 - › Important baptism points
 - › Writing a personal testimony
 - › Which weekend service you’d like to be baptized in
- Submit a final personal testimony to:
 - MaraP@fearlessfollower.org (Ridge Point)
 - SarahB@fearlessfollower.org (Cultivate)
 - ErinR@fearlessfollower.org (Third Coast)

Tools to get started on these things are found in the Next Steps section of this booklet.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE DAY OF BAPTISM

- **Before Baptism**

- › Sit in the service as you usually would
- › When dismissed by the speaker, check in with the baptism coordinator as directed
- › Use restrooms to change into your dark clothing
- › The baptism coordinator will have a printed copy of your submitted personal testimony

- **During Baptism**

- › Enter the baptism pool immediately after the person ahead of you exits the pool (if your guests are quick, they can enter the stage as you enter the pool—poolside support!)
- › Read your testimony into the microphone
- › Respond to the question “who is Jesus to you?”
- › Plug your nose with one hand and put your other hand on your wrist
- › The baptizer will put one hand on your back and the other on your hand that is grasping your wrist
- › The baptizer will hold you while you are being immersed
- › Bend at the knees to go backward
- › Help the baptizer return you to a standing position

- **After Baptism**

- › Lots of people will cheer for you!
- › Exit the baptism pool
- › You’ll be handed a towel to dry off
- › Head backstage to dry off and change into dry clothes
- › You’ll receive a DVD of the baptism service in the mail

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I was baptized as an infant?

A: Infant baptism is not a symbol of one's decision to repent, nor is it a symbol of identification with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Infant baptism is a time of celebration for the faith family to commit to assist the child's parents in raising the child in the ways of Jesus. Like believer's baptism, infant baptism does not save. We encourage you, even if baptized as an infant, to be baptized as a believer to publicly identify yourself with Jesus.

Q: What if I just want to make a profession of faith?

A: What a great thing! We give opportunity for all participants to write their testimony. Before being baptized you get to read your public testimony for the full faith community to hear.

Q: What if I already made a profession of faith ... do I still have to be baptized?

A: We are thrilled that you have publicly declared your commitment to Jesus. While this is an important step in the journey of a believer, the symbol of baptism is one of which Jesus speaks. We encourage all people, even those who have already made a profession of faith but have not yet experienced believer's baptism, to be baptized.

Q: What if I do not want to go under the water?

A: If you have a strong personal preference, or a physical/medical reason to be baptized by sprinkling/pouring, please email us a brief explanation, and a pastor will contact you to figure out a plan. We're here to help you.

Q: What if I am uncomfortable being soaking wet in front of the whole church body? Can I be baptized in a smaller setting or by my Rooted or Life Group?

A: As with most exciting events, the more people who gather to celebrate, the more fun it is! Baptism is not just you getting in the water. It is the faith community celebrating alongside you. We recognize not everyone wants to be in front of a large group of people, soaking wet. Therefore, while we encourage baptism to be done on weekends, we can help you arrange your baptism at another time and with a smaller group of people.

Q: What if I am embarrassed to share my testimony?

A: Every believer has a story of redemption. While our lives before Christ are never pretty, it is in His redemption that we find joy, wholeness and beauty. The good news is that you do not need to unpack all the embarrassing details of your life. You can simply tell the faith community what your life is like now. As you write your story you can say something as simple as, "I did not meet Jesus until I was ___ years old. My life was difficult before that." Those who are following Jesus know that life was difficult before Jesus. We have a tool in the Next Steps section of this booklet to help you write your testimony.

Have more questions?

Call our offices at 616-395-2600 or email us:

MaraP@fearlessfollower.org (Ridge Point)

SarahB@fearlessfollower.org (Cultivate)

ErinR@fearlessfollower.org (Third Coast)

Next Steps

This section contains several tools that will be used in the baptism class.

Feel free to look through the next few pages. There are some things you can get started on now, if you like, but we'll collect completed pages at the baptism class.

Check your program, our website and weekend announcements to know when our next baptism class will be.

If you have any questions about any of the following pages, send an email:

MaraP@fearlessfollower.org (Ridge Point)

SarahB@fearlessfollower.org (Cultivate)

ErinR@fearlessfollower.org (Third Coast)

What does it mean to be a Christian?

1. You believe in a God who _____.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

2. You believe that people have _____ against God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.(Romans 6:23)

3. You believe Jesus Christ died as a _____ to pay for your rebellion.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

4. You have accepted Jesus as _____.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

What is baptism?

1. It is for those who are _____.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

2. It is a _____.

...this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also -- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Peter 3:21)

3. Historically, it symbolizes _____.

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. (Matthew 3:4-6)

4. For Christians it symbolizes two things...

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:3-4)

_____ to rebellion against God.

_____ in submission to God.

5. It is the opportunity to make a _____ proclamation of your faith.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 1:16)

6. _____ is biblical and is the best way to symbolize the meaning of baptism.

7. To emphasize the importance of baptism, _____ was baptized even though he didn't need to be.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)

YOUR TESTIMONY

When sharing your testimony, you're sharing what God's done in your life. There are three parts of your story that create a testimony:

- What your life was like before you accepted Jesus
- What you did to accept Jesus
- How your life has changed since you accepted Jesus

A well-written testimony communicates each of these elements in no more than three paragraphs. Here's an example to help get you started:

Before I met Jesus, I was scared of two things: failing and dying.
(Write 3-4 sentences that show how this was true.)

Then one day I met Jesus.
(Write 3-4 sentences that show us how that happened: who were you with, where were you, what did you say or do?)

I still have fears, but I don't fear failure or death like I used to.
(Write 3-4 sentences that show us how knowing Jesus affects your life and outlook. Be honest: it's good to show where you're noticing positive change and where you still have struggles.)

You can use the space on the next two pages to begin drafting your testimony. Please keep your testimony to 300 words or fewer.

Once you've got a draft, type your story into an email and send it to us:

MaraP@fearlessfollower.org (Ridge Point)

SarahB@fearlessfollower.org (Cultivate)

ErinR@fearlessfollower.org (Third Coast)

We'll read through it and work with you to make sure it communicates your story well.

MY TESTIMONY...

Use the following two pages to write your testimony (300 words or less).

MY TESTIMONY...

BAPTISM INFORMATION FORM

Feel free to fill this out whenever you would like and turn it in at the baptism class.

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

I'd like to be batized at :

Cultivate: SUN 10am

Third Coast: SUN 10am

Ridge Point (circle one): **SAT, 6pm** **SUN, 9am** **SUN, 11am**

Who will baptize you?

Pastoral Staff. I'd like _____ to baptize me.

(provide staff member's name)

Other. I understand that I need to make these arrangements.

I'm planning to ask _____ to baptize me.

(provide baptizer's name)

Once baptism scheduling is completed, we will confirm your service time via email or phone call.

Bible Study for Those Being Baptized

Read through these two passages, applying the Bible Study Loop pictured below. Use this loop to grow your relationship with God by reading, reflecting on and responding to God's Word. Then the next time you sit and study God's Word, review to see how you did in responding to God.

Our prayer is that as you study **Romans 6:1-14** and **Colossians 2:9-15**, you grow in your relationship with God, understanding who God is as your Father and becoming more of who you are in Christ.

REVIEW

DID I DO IT?

If not, why not?

If so, how'd it go?

Record your progress.

RESPOND

WHAT WILL I DO?

Before you meet with God again, plan a measurable way you will respond to what God has revealed to you.

Record your response.

READ

WHAT DO I SEE?

Read the passage twice, focusing on the obvious: people, places, ideas, repetition.

Record what you see.

REFLECT

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What is God teaching you in this passage? Use your observations and prayer to reflect on this.

Record your reflections.



Romans 6:1-14

RELATE Ask God to guide your time of Bible study. Perhaps you could pray, Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instruction.

(Psalm 119:18)

READ the passage two times. Record here what you see.

REFLECT Use your observations and prayer to discern what God is teaching is you through this passage.

RESPOND Record a measurable way you will respond to what God has revealed to you.

REVIEW The next time you spend time with God, review your response. Did you follow through? If so, how did it go? If not, why not?

Colossians 2:9-15

RELATE Ask God to guide your time of Bible study. Perhaps you could pray, Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instruction.

(Psalm 119:18)

READ the passage two times. Record here what you see.

REFLECT Use your observations and prayer to discern what God is teaching is you through this passage.

RESPOND Record a measurable way you will respond to what God has revealed to you.

REVIEW The next time you spend time with God, review your response. Did you follow through? If so, how did it go? If not, why not?

Talking with Your Student about Baptism

If a student is under 10-years old and wants to be baptized, the child and guardian(s) should first meet with a Family Ministries staff member to discuss the meaning and purpose of baptism.

If a student is under 15-years old, a parent or guardian must be present at the baptism.

If a student is between 15 and 18-years old, a parent must give verbal consent before baptism.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR STUDENT WANTS TO BE BAPTIZED:

It's important for your student to know that baptism does not save him or her. The water does not wash away your student's sins. Forgiveness comes through what baptism symbolizes: namely, Jesus' death that covered your sins and His resurrection that defeated your death. Believers are baptized into the name of Jesus so we can show our identification with Him.

Believers who observe a student's baptism thank God for His work in the life of the student being baptized. And that's why baptism is a party for us - we celebrate God's work to forgive and save anyone who turns to God through Jesus. So as your student is baptized, everyone watching has an opportunity to worship God for Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf.

BAPTISM SHOULD BE YOUR CHILD'S IDEA, NOT YOURS.

A student's desire to please adults means that sometimes suggesting baptism to a student could result in a "yes" at the wrong time.

BE SURE YOUR STUDENT UNDERSTANDS THE GOSPEL.

Even if the student doesn't understand the Gospel's implications, be sure he or she understands that Jesus is the only way he or she can be saved. Salvation can't be earned through good works, eliminating bad behaviors or being baptized.

CONSIDER IF THERE'S EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN YOUR STUDENT'S LIFE.

Do you see any fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control, from Galatians 5)? If you're not sure, it's ok to wait - we want to make sure baptism is an outward expression of what God has already done in your student's life.

CONSIDER IF NOW IS THE BEST TIME.

Because you are your student's spiritual leader, only you can determine if getting baptized now or later is better. Waiting is ok. Some parents prefer to wait until evidence of the Holy Spirit's work is more obvious in their student's life. Others choose to wait until their student is old enough to recall the baptism experience. Still others prefer to immediately baptize believing student. All of these options are good. Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus and a testimony of what He's already done. It is not a saving act, so waiting cannot hurt your student.

If your student can write a testimony of God's work in his or her life, you can see the Holy Spirit's work in his or life life and you feel now is the right time, then it sounds like your student is ready for baptism.

REGISTERING FOR BAPTISM.

A student who is mature enough to be baptized is mature enough to go through the same baptism process adults use. Refer to the "Next Steps" section of this booklet to learn more about that process.

Notes...

Notes...